

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Nevada County Transportation Commission

FROM: Daniel B. Landon, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report for the November 15, 2006 Meeting

DATE: November 3, 2006

---

### 1. STATUS REPORT ON THE DORSEY DRIVE INTERCHANGE PROJECT

The following is a summary of the September 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting with Grass Valley, Caltrans District 3, and the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) Dorsey Drive Ad Hoc Committee.

Attendees from local agencies were: Gene Haroldsen, Grass Valley City Administrator; Tim Kiser, Grass Valley City Engineer; Dan Landon, NCTC Executive Director; John Spencer, Nevada County Supervisor; Russ Steele, NCTC Commissioner; Lisa Swarthout, Grass Valley City Council Member; Gerard Tassone, Grass Valley City Mayor.

Jody Jones, Director, Caltrans District 3 and the following Caltrans staff attended: Amarjeet Benipal, Chief, North Region Program/Project Management; Winder Bajwa, Project Manager; and Rick Montre, Branch Chief, Traffic Operations.

At the start of the meeting, Tim Kiser stated that Grass Valley's goal for the Dorsey Drive Interchange project was to design and construct a complete interchange. Jody Jones stated that Caltrans position was to accommodate the desires of the community, as long as, those desires did not violate design and safety standards, did not negatively impact mainline or ramp operations, and the new facilities did not create any issues for Caltrans maintenance. Caltrans needs NCTC and the City of Grass Valley to provide clear direction regarding the scope of the project.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a list of issues/concerns prepared by Grass Valley. Caltrans agreed to consider the following seven of nine items put forth by the City:

1. To minimize any delays, Caltrans will start the right-of-way acquisition process. This doesn't mean that Caltrans will be purchasing properties in the next few months, but they will begin the engineering that leads to property identification and purchase. Caltrans will start work on property along the freeway first. They will not work on the properties in the northwest quadrant of the project until the issues associated with the potential merging of the westbound offramp and Joerschke Drive are resolved.

2. In recognition of the fact that increasing the bridge elevation results in more and higher retaining walls, Caltrans agreed to look at design solutions that do not raise the existing deck elevation. The Caltrans standard for bridge design is 16.5 feet of clearance. If the existing structure can be widened, then a design exception for 15 feet in the 1994 Project Study Report may apply. If a new structure is needed, Caltrans will consider alternative design features that may reduce the thickness of the structure, and thus provide more clearance between the roadway and the bottom of the bridge.
3. Caltrans agreed to further evaluate the concept of merging Joerschke Drive with the proposed westbound offramp (see attached diagram). This will have some parking and access ramifications for the City to address as well. If this concept is accepted, Joerschke Drive will not need to be realigned and the right-of-way impacts of the project will be significantly reduced.
4. As a cost saving measure, Caltrans agreed to reevaluate cut and fill slope requirements based on the project geotechnical reports. The 1994 Project Study Report called for cut slopes of 1.5:1. The Project Report approved in June 2006 shows cut slopes of 2:1. This has the effect of increasing the right-of-way needed for the project. Caltrans cited a recent project experience where 1.5:1 slopes had failed under unusually heavy rains. However, they did agree to look carefully at the rock and soil types in this project area, and will then make a final determination on the cut slope requirements.
5. To insure that the project fits with the surrounding community, Caltrans agreed to allow the City to develop a standard typical section for the Dorsey Drive roadway. Caltrans reiterated the position that they will work with local requests as long as design, safety, operations, and maintenance standards are maintained.

Caltrans showed a simulation that indicated with 2027 traffic volumes, a 4-lane bridge would result in LOS E/F operations, while a 5-lane bridge would provide LOS C/D operations. The Caltrans simulations only show the interchange project area. The cost to develop simulation models that would include the Brunswick Road and Idaho-Maryland Road corridors would likely be in the \$30,000-\$50,000 range. Using the existing NCTC traffic model, we can forecast the reduction of traffic in the surrounding corridors, but there is no "visual" representation.

6. In keeping with the City's and Caltrans' goal of constructing a complete project, Caltrans agreed to design the ultimate project, and then will determine if phasing is required based on funding available. Ms. Jones cited a major project in the City of Folsom as an example of a project that was able to obtain additional funding when it became available because the full design had been completed.
7. Caltrans agreed to revise the approval process for the design and implementation of the improvements to insure that the City and NCTC are fully engaged.

Ms. Jones indicated that it would take about six to eight weeks for her staff to work through the review and evaluation of the technical items (i.e. bridge deck elevation, merging the offramp with

Joerschke Drive, cut and fill slopes, etc.). Upon completion of their evaluation, Caltrans District 3 and Headquarters staff will meet with local agency staff to review their findings.

The results of the City's sales tax measure on the November ballot will provide important information regarding funding for the project. A Project Development Team (PDT) meeting has been set for November 9<sup>th</sup>. The agenda includes discussion of the following items:

- ✓ Status of funding.
- ✓ Reduce width of Dorsey Drive (excluding overcrossing structure).
- ✓ Merging Joerschke Drive with the westbound offramp.
- ✓ Height of the overcrossing structure.
- ✓ Steeper cut slopes.

2. STATUS REPORT ON THE SR 49 LA BARR MEADOWS ROAD SIGNAL AND WIDENING PROJECT

Both the draft Project Report and draft Environmental Documents are nearly complete for this project. The last three items to be completed on the Project Report are the alternative design concepts to be considered, the right-of-way cost estimates, and the full project cost estimates. Caltrans has forwarded the draft Environmental Document to the Federal Highway Administration for their review and comment prior to the document being released for public review. Caltrans' goal is to circulate the draft Environmental Document to the public during December 2006. The proposed completion of the project schedule is as follows:

Project Approval	July 2007
Plans and Estimates	August 2008
Right-of-Way Certification	January 2009
Begin Construction	May 2009

A PDT meeting has been scheduled for November 8<sup>th</sup> to review any impacts to the funding for the project, based on outcomes of the November election. The project management schedule, updates on the cost estimates, project alternatives, and status of the Environmental Document will also be discussed.

3. HIGHWAY 49 TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

On October 26<sup>th</sup> the Highway 49 Traffic Safety Committee met. Those in attendance included: Supervisor John Spencer; John Rumsey, Nevada County Department of Transportation and Sanitation; Tom Wood, Andrew Brandt, and Robert Peterson, Caltrans District 3; Sergeant Mike Lawrence, California Highway Patrol; Bruce and Deborah Jones and Chet Krage, Citizens for Highway 49 Safety; Jerry Good, Higgins Fire District; Sonja Vargas, CALSTAR Air Ambulance Service, and NCTC Executive Director Dan Landon. The Committee reviewed the effects of CHP's increased enforcement in the corridor (statistics for January 1 through September 30, 2006 are attached). The Committee discussed the need for adjustment to the signal at the SR 49 and Combie Road intersection to provide a right turn arrow from Combie Road to northbound Highway 49. The County Department of Transportation and Sanitation staff and Caltrans staff will be working on this issue. The Committee reviewed the status of the installation of the rumble strip on SR 49 and encouraged Caltrans to continue to work with the contractor to accomplish the project as soon as possible. It was also noted that the project construction will need to be coordinated with the CHP.

The potential for additional funding for improvements to the SR 49 corridor were discussed. One potential opportunity for funding is the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) program included as a provision of Proposition 1B on the November ballot. In anticipation of the passage of Proposition 1B, I have scheduled a meeting with Caltrans District 3 Director Jody Jones for late November. If the Proposition passes, project submittals will be due to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) by January 2007. In selecting projects for funding under the CMIA Program, the CTC will seek to balance three general mandates provided in the Proposition 1B Bond Act:

- a. The basic CMIA policy objective is to improve performance in highly congested travel corridors. Improvements may be on state highway systems or major access routes to the state highway system.
- b. Geographic balance between regions. The Bond Act requires that the CTC seek to geographically balance funding, and to provide mobility improvements in highly traveled or highly congested corridors in all regions of California.
- c. Early Delivery. The Bond Act requires the CTC to provide mobility benefit in the earliest possible timeframe. It also mandates that the inclusion of a project in the CMIA program be based on a demonstration that the project can commence construction or implementation no later than December 31, 2012.

Another provision of the CMIA program is that in selecting projects for funding, the CTC intends to balance improvements to mobility in highly congested urban corridors and improvements to mobility and connectivity in the interregional state highway corridors. The CTC expects to evaluate urban corridor and interregional corridor improvements separately. CMIA program improvements outside of urbanized areas will be primarily on "focus routes" identified by Caltrans in its Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (ITSP) developed in 1998. SR 49 is one of the "focus routes" identified in the ITSP.

The Committee also discussed the passage of SB 3, which was recently signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. SB 3 designated Vasco Road in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties as a Special Safety Zone. The bill provided for enhanced enforcement and funding for the CHP in that corridor. The safety committee is interested in assessing the possibility of getting similar legislation for the SR 49 safety corridor.

#### 4. TNT/TMA

At the Truckee/North Tahoe Transportation Management Association (TNT/TMA) meeting held on October 5<sup>th</sup>, a presentation was made regarding a new transit service in the Truckee/North Tahoe region. It is called the "North Lake Tahoe Express Airport Service". A brochure for this service is enclosed. This service will provide additional connections between Truckee, North Tahoe, and the Reno area. Additional information regarding this service can be found on the Internet at [www.northlaketahoeexpress.com](http://www.northlaketahoeexpress.com). Implementation of this service is a good example of the impact that the TNT/TMA has had on transportation services in the Truckee/North Tahoe region.

#### 5. FISCAL YEAR 2006/07 UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS

The NCTC's responsibility for administration of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds includes the annual Unmet Transit Needs process which has three components: 1) soliciting

testimony on unmet transit needs; 2) analyzing needs in accordance to adopted definitions of “unmet transit needs” that are “reasonable to meet”; and 3) adoption of a finding regarding unmet transit needs. State law requires the NCTC to ensure that any transit needs that are found reasonable to meet, are met prior to any TDA funds being allocated for non-transit purposes.

In accordance with the TDA, the following outreach efforts have been, or will be conducted to receive testimony on unmet transit needs for Fiscal Year 2006/07 that may exist in Nevada County:

- ◆ A joint public workshop on unmet transit needs was held on November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. at the North Tahoe Conference Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd., Kings Beach, CA 96143. Staff from NCTC, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency were in attendance.
- ◆ The Transit Services Commission will host a public hearing on unmet transit needs at their November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting at 10:30 a.m. at the Grass Valley City Hall Council Chambers (lower level), 125 East Main Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945.
- ◆ A meeting of the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) will be scheduled in December for members to review the testimony received at the public hearing and workshop and to provide the SSTAC an opportunity to identify any potential unmet transit needs.

After receiving all of the input on the perceived unmet transit needs, NCTC staff will complete an assessment of those needs and review it with the SSTAC. The *Nevada County Transit Needs Assessment*, along with a recommendation from the SSTAC, will provide the basis for the NCTC to make findings in accordance with the TDA regarding “unmet transit needs” and the needs that are “reasonable to meet” at the January 17<sup>th</sup> NCTC meeting.

## 6. AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY UPDATE

The 30-day public comment period on the *Revised Draft Western Nevada County 8-Hour Ozone Regional Emissions Analysis for the Dorsey Drive Interchange and Squirrel Creek Bridge Projects* concluded on October 4, 2006. No public comments were received during this time. The revised regional emissions analysis was also reviewed for compliance with the air quality conformity regulations on September 21, 2006 by the Western Nevada County Conformity Working Group. This working group consists of representatives from the NCTC, Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD), Caltrans, California Air Resources Board (CARB), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The *Final Western Nevada County 8-Hour Ozone Regional Emissions Analysis for the Dorsey Drive Interchange and Squirrel Creek Bridge Projects* was submitted to the FHWA for a conformity determination on October 20, 2006. Caltrans received correspondence from the FHWA on October 31, 2006 constituting FHWA’s final conformity determination for the Dorsey Drive Interchange and Squirrel Creek Bridge projects, completing the conformity process.

## 7. COUNTY-WIDE BICYCLE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, NCTC staff issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop a county-wide Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) for Nevada County. This BMP will incorporate and expand on existing and

previous bicycle planning efforts in Nevada County, and will seek input from local jurisdictions, citizens, and bicycle advocacy groups. The completion of this project will make all of the jurisdictions in Nevada County eligible to annually submit bicycle projects identified in the BMP for grant funding through the State Bicycle Transportation Account. It is anticipated that work on this project will begin in early December.

#### 8. TRANSIT TRANSFER FACILITY SITE LOCATION STUDY

NCTC staff intends to issue a RFP in November for a study to identify and evaluate several candidate sites for a new Gold Country Stage transit transfer facility. Evaluation criteria will be developed by the project consultant in cooperation with staff representatives from the County of Nevada, City of Grass Valley, and the NCTC. Input from community organizations will also be solicited during the site evaluation process to ensure that the new facility enhances the community from a transportation, land use, and community design perspective. This study will result in the recommendation of a preferred location and a preliminary design for the new facility. This project will be funded through a Caltrans Transit Technical Planning Grant in the amount of \$44,265, and \$5,735 in local matching funds. The completion of this planning effort will facilitate the future use of \$777,747 in Federal Earmark funds for construction of the new transit transfer facility.

#### 9. TRIENNIAL PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Every three years, NCTC is required by the California Public Utilities Code Section 99246 to contract for performance audits of its activities and the activities of each operator (Nevada County Transit Services Division and the Town of Truckee) to whom it allocates funds. NCTC is not required to conduct performance audits of services that receive funding under Article 8 of the Transportation Development Act (i.e. Gold Country Telecare, Inc.). However, in the past, NCTC has always requested performance audits of those services to insure they were operated in a cost effective manner and to provide them guidance for improving service.

NCTC staff issued a RFP for performance audits on August 14<sup>th</sup> and received three responses. Staff from the Town of Truckee, Gold Country Telecare, and NCTC independently scored the proposals according to four criteria: 1) understanding of the requirements; 2) approach and strategies; 3) cost effectiveness; 4) experience. Interviews were conducted on September 28<sup>th</sup> and the firm, Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) was selected. A contract was signed on October 17<sup>th</sup>. PMC is scheduled to collect data and review operations of NCTC and the transit/paratransit operators in November, December and January. The draft performance audit reports will be delivered to staff in early February for review, and the final reports with an oral presentation is scheduled for the March 21, 2007 Commission meeting.

#### 10. NCTC OFFICE SCHEDULE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

In keeping with our practice of maximizing the use of floating holidays and vacation time during the holiday season, the Nevada County Transportation Commission office will be closed November 23-24, and from December 22, 2006 through January 1, 2007.

attachments